

Political Science 1AA3 Government, Politics, and Power

Fall 2019

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Course Description

This course explores the political process in Canada. It starts by asking a question: what does politics in Canada actually look like? Most of us are familiar with politics as it occurs at election time: Political Parties competing for our votes with the promise that they and only they have the solution for whatever problems ail society. This *is* politics. But politics *is not* limited to Election Day or to political parties and their campaign promises. Politics is everywhere: it saturates our daily lives, it crisscrosses our economic and social interactions, it is embedded in the formal and informal rules under which we all live. We will explore this broader sense of politics - investigating many of the key ideas and institutions that structure and govern our lives in Canada. We will scrutinize concepts like democracy, liberty, and equality. How does one organize a society based on these ideas? We will examine how these (and other) ideas have influenced the Canadian political landscape – from the platforms of the major Political Parties to the institutions of the Canadian state.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course students should be able to:

- Understand current political issues in the light of larger social, political, and historical forces
- Explore political problems, both individually and as a member of a group
- Express ideas both orally and in written (essay) form
- Develop research, writing, and presentation skills

Required Materials and Texts

- Geoghegan, Vincent, and Wilford, Rick, eds., *Political Ideologies: An Introduction*, 4th edition, Abingdon: Routledge, 2014
 - This book is available in an electronic form (at no cost) through the McMaster University library catalogue (provided that you are logged in to your library account). Please download a copy as soon as possible.
- Mill, John Stuart, *On Liberty* – any edition is acceptable
 - Your first paper will be based on this book
- I have included several articles (see the weekly schedule below) that are accessible on-line. Some of the articles will have a hypertext link that will bring you to the article directly, while those listed as “available on-line” can be obtained for free via the library catalogue or through Google scholar (provided that you are logged in to your McMaster library account).
- Several book chapters have been posted on Avenue to learn.

Class Format

The key to doing well in this course is to attend all lectures and tutorials. *Please note that many of the concepts covered in lecture will not be covered in the required readings and vice versa.*

Course Evaluation – Overview

1. Tutorial Participation – 25%
2. Paper I – 20%, due in tutorial the week of October 7-11, 2019
3. Paper II – 20%, due in tutorial the week of November 11-15, 2019
4. Exam – 35%, to be held in the official examination period in December

Course Evaluation – Details

Tutorial Participation – 25%

Your tutorials offer you an opportunity to have a spirited discussion of the key political issues confronting modern Canadian society (a detailed week-by-week overview of your tutorial assignments is contained in the Tutorial guide posted on Avenue). You will be presented with a series of political problems: Your task is to gather information, construct a solution, and present and justify that solution to your tutorial group. The overall objective of the tutorials is to illustrate the complexity of real world political problems, while concurrently developing your research, writing, and presentation skills.

Participation in tutorial groups accounts for 25% of your grade. Remember, participation is not synonymous with attendance. A successful grade is dependent upon your ability to actively, regularly, and intelligently contribute to discussion.

Paper I – 20%, due in tutorial the week of October 7-11, 2019

Each student will prepare and submit a 5 page minimum paper that answers the following question:

In *On Liberty*, John Stuart Mill argues that “[i]f all mankind minus one were of one opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind.” What is Mill’s justification for this argument? In Mill’s opinion, what limitations, if any, should there be on this right to free speech? What assumptions does Mill’s argument depend upon? Do you agree with Mill’s point of view?

The main goal of this assignment is to test your ability to independently read through, summarize, and interpret a work of serious political theory. The only resource needed to complete this assignment is *On Liberty*. In this light, secondary sources (such as SparkNotes or Wikipedia) should not be used.

Paper II – 20%, due in tutorial the week of November 11-15, 2019

Each student will prepare and submit a 6 page minimum paper that answers the following question:

What is the proper role for the state when it comes to regulating speech? In your first paper you examined the position of one of the key theorists associated with this question (John Stuart Mill). In Paper II the goal is to evaluate an actual controversial speaker and determine what actions (if any) the state should take. With this in mind, we will be watching a debate in class on October 21 between Mark Steyn and a group of law school students who argued that Steyn (and Maclean's magazine) crossed a line. In your opinion, are the arguments of Steyn or the petitioners against Steyn more compelling? Should the state (via the commission) intervene in this case? Why or why not? Did the state (via the commission) intervene? In light of this, are the restrictions on speech in Canada too weak? Are they appropriate and balanced? Or are they too restrictive?

Please note: Steyn is accused by the petitioners of making Islamophobic arguments. If, for any reason whatsoever, you feel that watching this specific debate will not further your insights on the public policy of regulating speech, please contact me before October 21. In these cases, I can substitute a debate involving a different controversial speaker in lieu of Steyn.

Exam – 35%, to be held in the official examination period in December

The December exam will cover material from *both* the lectures and the required readings.

Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings

Topic 1 (September 5-9, 2019)

Introduction

What is Political Science? What makes something 'political'? Is government necessary?

Topic 2 (September 12-16, 2019)

Democracy

What is democracy? What is the history of democracy? What are the limits to modern democracy? Can and should democracy be extended to the international system?

Readings:

Held, David, "Democracy: From city states to a cosmopolitan order?" *Political Studies*, XL, Special Issue, 1992, pp10-39 – available on-line

Topic 3 (September 19-23, 2019)

Liberty

Should individual freedom be the paramount principle upon which society is constructed? Should there be limitations to free speech? Should there be limitations on the “free market”?

Readings:

Chapter 2 (Liberalism) in *Political Ideologies*, pp19-46

By this point you should also have read the book *On Liberty*, by John Stuart Mill

Topic 4 (September 26-30, 2019)

Equality

What causes inequality? Are political outcomes determined by unequal economic processes? Can we have true equality in complex modern societies?

Readings:

Chapter 4 (Socialism) in *Political Ideologies*, pp71-98

Topic 5 (October 3, 2019)

Conservatism

Is there an organic wisdom in tradition? Is there political value in using the past to guide the present?

Readings:

Chapter 3 (Conservatism) in *Political Ideologies*, pp47-70

Topic 6 (October 7, 2019)

Green Politics

Is the planet facing an environmental crisis? To what extent is the environmental problem a political problem? Will a planetary solution require a planetary government?

Readings:

Chapter 7 (Green Political Theory) in *Political Ideologies*, pp153-178

Harrison, Kathryn, "[The fleeting Canadian harmony on carbon pricing](#)," *IRPP*, July 8, 2019

Topic 7 (October 10, 2019)

Patriarchy

What are the political implications of gender? Are rights, rewards, and representation skewed against women?

Readings:

Chapter 8 (Feminism) in *Political Ideologies*, pp179-212

Reading Week (October 14-18, 2019)

No Class: Mid-term recess

Topic 8 (October 21, 2019)

What are reasonable limits on speech?

In this class we will be watching a debate that deals with this question in the Canadian context.

Topic 9 (October 24, 2019)

Democracy in practice:

Democratic countries rely upon different institutional methods to determine the “will of the people.” Given this, are some countries more genuinely democratic than others? Should Canada reform its electoral system?

Readings:

Gallagher, Michael, “Electoral Institutions and Representation,” in Lawrence LeDuc, et al., eds., *Comparing Democracies 4: Elections and Voting in a Changing World*, London: Sage, 2014, pp11-31 – posted on Avenue to Learn

Stone, Laura, “[Trudeau abandons electoral reform, breaking key campaign promise](#),” *The Globe and Mail*, February 01, 2017

Topic 10 (October 28-31, 2019)

What does democracy in Canada actually look like?

Starting from the top? The political executive in Canada

Readings:

Savoie, Donald J., *Governing from the centre: the concentration of power in Canadian politics*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999, Chapter 4, pp71-108 – available on Avenue

Bharti Bianca, "[Trudeau's expulsion of two former cabinet ministers is virtually unprecedented, records show](#)," *National Post*, April 8, 2019

Topic 11 (November 4-7, 2019)

The House of Commons and The Senate

Readings:

Brodie, Ian, *At the Centre of Government: The Prime Minister and the limits on political power*," Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2018, Chapter 5, pp74-108 - Available on Avenue

Thomas, Paul G., "[Moving toward a New and Improved Senate](#)," *IRPP Study 70*, Montreal: Institute for Research on Public Policy, March 2019

Topic 12 (November 11, 2019)

The Bureaucracy

Readings:

Savoie, Donald J., *Breaking the bargain: public servants, ministers, and parliament*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003, Chapter 1, pp3-20 – posted on Avenue to Learn

Petrou, Michael, "[What happens when civil servants get partisan](#)," *Maclean's*, November 11, 2015

Topic 13 (November 14-18, 2019)

The Canadian Constitution, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and the Judiciary:

How is the tension between majority rule and individual rights handled in the Canadian context?

Readings:

Snow, Dave, and Harding, Mark S., "From Normative Debates to Comparative Methodology: The Three Waves of Post Charter Supreme Court Scholarship in Canada," *American Review of Canadian Studies*, 45, 4, 2015, pp451-466 – available on-line

Monpetit, Jonathan, "[As fight over Quebec's religious symbols law shifts to courts, legal experts debate best way to challenge it](#)," *CBC*, July 8, 2019

You should also read the [Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#)

Topic 14 (November 21-25, 2019)

The Canadian Federation

How united is Canada? Can the Canadian federal model successfully navigate provincial differences?

Readings:

Rocher, François, "Self-determination and the Use of Referendums: the Case of Quebec," *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, 27, 1, 2014, pp25-45 – available on-line

Connolly, Amanda, "[Don't write off Western anger as 'alienation' – it runs a whole lot deeper: Calgary professor](#)," *Global News*, May 5, 2019

Topic 15 (November 28 - December 2, 2019)

Review

Course Policies

Submission of Assignments

Please submit a paper copy of your assignment in tutorial to your Teaching Assistant on the scheduled due date.

Grades

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

MARK	GRADE
90-100	A+
85-90	A
80-84	A-
77-79	B+
73-76	B
70-72	B-
67-69	C+
63-66	C
60-62	C-
57-59	D+
53-56	D
50-52	D-
0-49	F

Late Assignments

Please note: late papers may be subject to a 2% per day grade deduction. For example, an 80% essay will be reduced to 78% if it is received one day late, 76% if two days late, etc.

Absences, Missed Work, Illness

Requests for extensions should be submitted through the [MSAF process](#).

The expectation for this course is that all components (including tutorial participation) will be completed.

In the event of an approved extension for Paper 1 or Paper 2, the assignment will be due one week from the original due date.

Avenue to Learn

In this course we will be using Avenue to Learn. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous or Spiritual Observances (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the RISO policy. Students requiring a RISO accommodation should submit their request to their Faculty Office normally within 10 working days of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests

University Policies

Academic Integrity Statement

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behavior in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behavior can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on

the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

Students who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Academic accommodations must be arranged for each term of study. Student Accessibility Services can be contacted by phone 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or e-mail sas@mcmaster.ca. For further information, consult McMaster University’s Policy for [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#).

Faculty of Social Sciences E-mail Communication Policy

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student’s own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

Course Modification

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.